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#72

MARVEL® COMICS GROUP

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# GHOST RIDER™

JOHNNY BLAZE HELPLESS! THE QUENTIN CARNIVAL IN FLAMES! THE GHOST RIDER ENRAGED!

DON'T MISS... The FLAME and the FURY!

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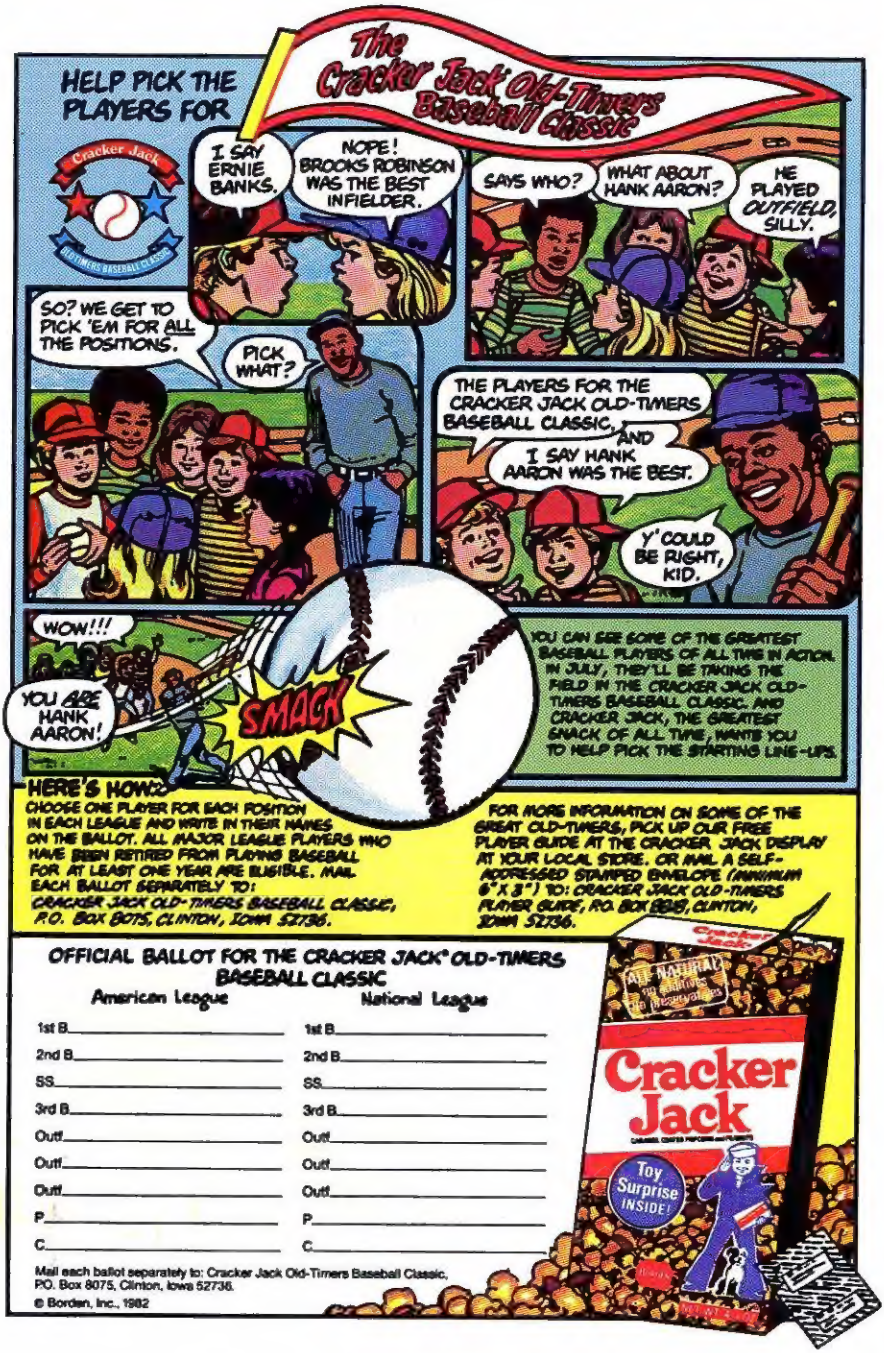
HELP PICK THE PLAYERS FOR
The Cracker Jack Old-Timers Baseball Classic
Cracker Jack
OLD-TIMERS BASEBALL CLASSIC
I SAY ERNIE BANKS.
NOPE! BROOKS ROBINSON WAS THE BEST INFIELDER.
SAYS WHO?
WHAT ABOUT HANK AARON?
HE PLAYED OUTFIELD, SILLY.
SO? WE GET TO PICK 'EM FOR ALL THE POSITIONS.
PICK WHAT?
THE PLAYERS FOR THE CRACKER JACK OLD-TIMERS BASEBALL CLASSIC,
AND I SAY HANK AARON WAS THE BEST.
Y' COULD BE RIGHT, KID.
WOW!!!
YOU ARE HANK AARON!
SMACK
YOU CAN SEE SOME OF THE GREATEST BASEBALL PLAYERS OF ALL TIME IN ACTION IN JULY, THEY'LL BE TAKING THE FIELD IN THE CRACKER JACK OLD-TIMERS BASEBALL CLASSIC. AND CRACKER JACK, THE GREATEST SNACK OF ALL TIME, WANTS YOU TO HELP PICK THE STARTING LINE-UPS.
HERE'S HOW:
CHOOSE ONE PLAYER FOR EACH POSITION IN EACH LEAGUE AND WRITE IN THEIR NAMES ON THE BALLOT. ALL MAJOR LEAGUE PLAYERS WHO HAVE BEEN RETIRED FROM PLAYING BASEBALL FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR ARE ELIGIBLE. MAIL EACH BALLOT SEPARATELY TO: CRACKER JACK OLD-TIMERS BASEBALL CLASSIC, P.O. BOX 8075, CLINTON, IOWA 52736.
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SOME OF THE GREAT OLD-TIMERS, PICK UP OUR FREE PLAYER GUIDE AT THE CRACKER JACK DISPLAY AT YOUR LOCAL STORE. OR MAIL A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE (MINIMUM 6" X 3") TO: CRACKER JACK OLD-TIMERS PLAYER GUIDE, P.O. BOX 8075, CLINTON, IOWA 52736.
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Cracker Jack
Toy Surprise INSIDE!

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Stan Lee PRESENTS: GHOST RIDER!

# TEMPTATIONS!

A Stern — Budiansky — Simone — Parker — Sharen — DeFalco — Shooter Production!

GIVE UP, BLAZE! YOU CAN'T KEEP UP THIS PACE FOREVER! SOONER OR LATER, I'LL CATCH YOU!
AND WHEN I DO, THE GHOST RIDER SHALL HAVE HIS FREEDOM!
FOR YEARS, JOHNNY BLAZE HAS BEEN POSSESSED BY THE HELL-SPAWNED DEMON KNOWN AS THE GHOST RIDER!
THAT IS HIS CURSE.
THIS IS HIS NIGHTMARE!

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YOU'VE KEPT ME BOTTLED UP IN YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS FOR OVER A WEEK, BLAZE!
THAT IS FAR TOO LONG A TIME!
TOO LONG?! IT'S NOT HALF LONG ENOUGH!
YOU CANNOT KEEP REPRESSING ME, BLAZE! I AM THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE! I CANNOT BE DENIED MY FREEDOM!
CRAM IT, SKULL-FACE!
TWISTING OPEN THE THROTTLE ON HIS BIKE, JOHNNY ROCKETS ACROSS THE SURREAL LANDSCAPE.
... BUT HIS SPEED IS MATCHED ALMOST INSTANTLY BY A MOTORCYCLE MADE SOLELY OF ELDRITCH FLAME.
NO ONE CAN OUTRUN THE GHOST RIDER, BLAZE!
NOT EVEN YOU!
THIS RACE ISN'T OVER YET, RIDER! AND I'VE GOT GEARS ON THIS BABY I HAVEN'T USED YET!

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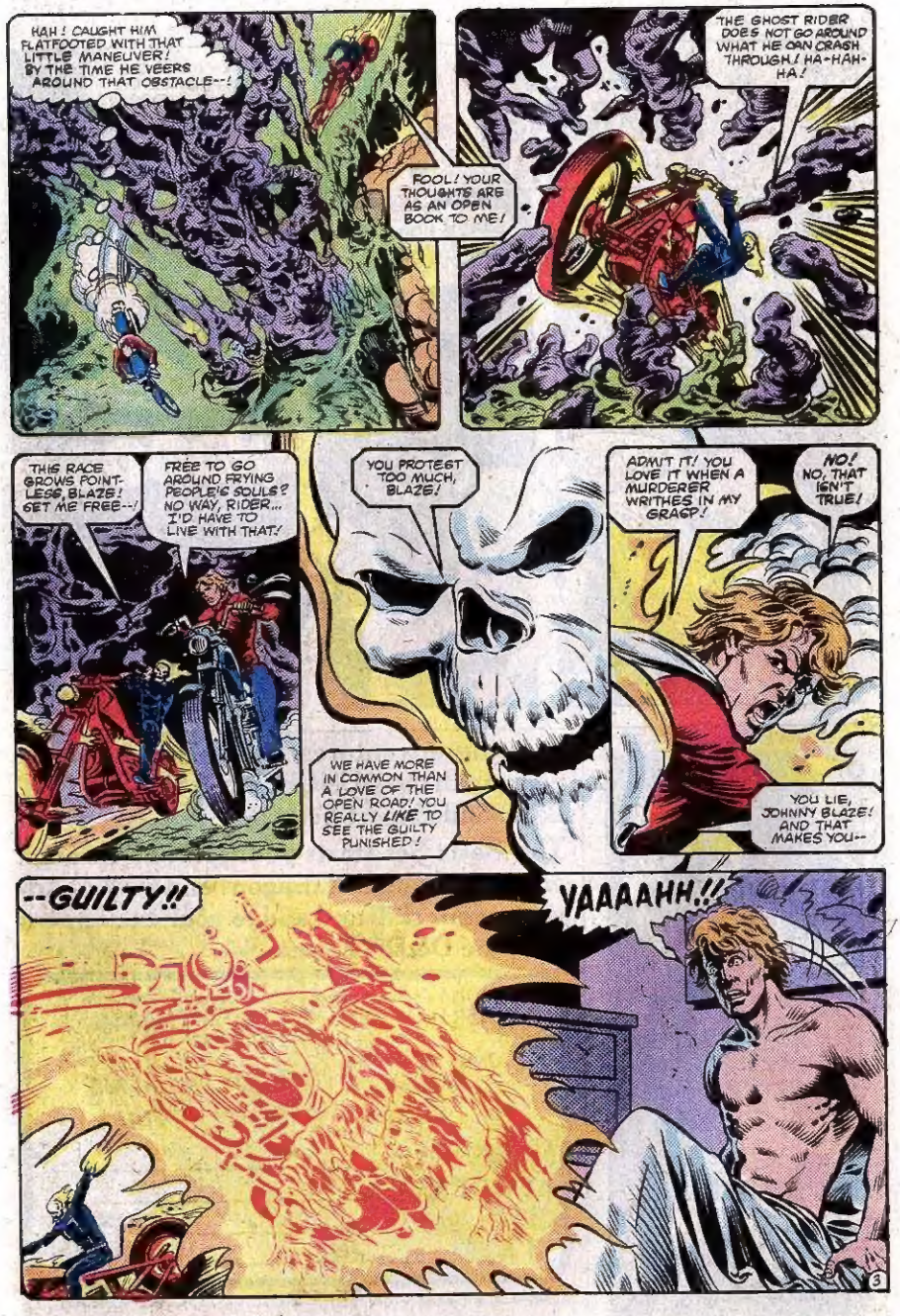
HAH! CAUGHT HIM FLATFOOTED WITH THAT LITTLE MANEUVER! BY THE TIME HE VEERS AROUND THAT OBSTACLE--!
FOOL! YOUR THOUGHTS ARE AS AN OPEN BOOK TO ME!
THE GHOST RIDER DOES NOT GO AROUND WHAT HE CAN CRASH THROUGH! HA-HAH-HA!
THIS RACE GROWS POINTLESS, BLAZE! SET ME FREE--!
FREE TO GO AROUND FRYING PEOPLE'S SOULS? NO WAY, RIDER... I'D HAVE TO LIVE WITH THAT!
YOU PROTEST TOO MUCH, BLAZE!
WE HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN A LOVE OF THE OPEN ROAD! YOU REALLY LIKE TO SEE THE GUILTY PUNISHED!
ADMIT IT! YOU LOVE IT WHEN A MURDERER WRITHES IN MY GRASP!
NO! NO, THAT ISN'T TRUE!
YOU LIE, JOHNNY BLAZE! AND THAT MAKES YOU--
--GUILTY!!
YAAAAHH!!
3

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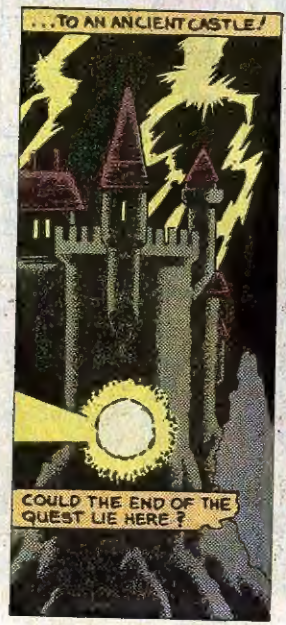
A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® ADVENTURE
OUR STORY: ATTEMPTING TO RESCUE THEIR MENTOR, OUR HEROES ARE CAUGHT BY A SUDDEN AVALANCHE!
EVIL FORCES ARE AT WORK HERE!
SAREN HAS BEEN HURT! WE MUST ACT QUICKLY!!
THIS MAGIC SCROLL MAY PROVIDE US WITH AN ESCAPE!
DIMENSION DOOR!!
WOOOSH!
THE SPELL CARRIES OUR HEROES

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WHOA! THAT WAS MORE THAN JUST A DREAM! SOMEHOW... SOMEWAY... THE GHOST RIDER WAS CONTACTING ME!
HE'S NEVER BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT BEFORE! HE'S BECOME SO POWERFUL LATELY--
--I'M AFRAID TO LET MY GUARD DOWN, FOR FEAR OF WHAT HE'LL DO WHEN HE'S IN CONTROL OF MY BODY!
"THE LAST TIME I WAS OUT WEST, HE NEARLY KILLED THE MUTANT ANGEL!"*
"THEN, THERE WAS THAT PHONY PRIEST G.R. STOPPED--
--AND THAT DRUNKEN REDNECK!
"GHOST RIDER IS SO RECKLESS! WHEN HE STOPPED THAT VAN THE OTHER WEEK, HE COULD'VE HURT A LOT OF INNOCENT PEOPLE!"**
*AVENGERS #214
**RECENT ISSUES.
THAT BLASTED DEMON DOESN'T CARE WHO HE HURTS... BUT I DO!
DON'T I?
THE GHOST RIDER WAS RIGHT! THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN I WANTED HIM TO TAKE OVER MY BODY... WHEN I WANTED HIS POWER TO PUNISH SOMEONE!
AM I BECOMING MORE LIKE HIM? WHAT IF... HE'S STARTING TO CONTROL ME?
AND, AS JOHNNY BLAZE ADDRESSES HIS QUESTIONS TO A SILENT MOON—
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--JUST ACROSS THE MIDWAY...
I'D FORGOTTEN HOW PEACEFUL A CARNIVAL COULD BE AFTER IT SHUTS DOWN FOR THE NIGHT.
WISH I COULD STAY HERE FOR-EVER.
ELIOT? YOU STILL UP, SON?
YEAH, YOU KNOW ME, POP-- I NEVER NEED MORE THAN A FEW HOURS SLEEP.
PULL UP A BARREL AND SIT A SPELL.
I THINK I'D LIKE THAT, SON. UH... ELIOT? HOW LONG YOU GONNA BE TRAVELING WITH THE SHOW?
OH, UNTIL I FEEL THE NEED TO MOVE ON. WHY? AM I WEARING OUT MY WELCOME?
NOTHIN' LIKE THAT! THING IS, MR. QUENTIN ASKED ME IF WE'D LIKE TO DO A FATHER-AND-SON ACT!
"CORKY AND SON-- CLOWNS EXTRAORDINAIRE!" HOW'S THAT SOUND?
NIX! CLOWNING IS ALL BEHIND ME NOW! I DON'T WANT ANY PART OF GREASE-PAINT OR RUBBER NOSES!
IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU FEEL.
BUT YOU ALWAYS WERE A BETTER CLOWN THAN ME.
THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAID WHEN I WAS A KID.
SON... WHAT WAS IT LIKE? IN PRISON, I MEAN.
BUT BEFORE ELIOT FRANKLIN CAN ANSWER...
BURROOM
THUNDER? BUT THERE'S NOT A CLOUD IN THE SKY!
THAT'S NOT THUNDER! I KNOW THAT SOUND!

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THE LOW, MUFFLED RUMBLE COMES NOT FROM THE SKIES, BUT FROM THE SURROUNDING HILLSIDE--
-- AND IT'S FOLLOWED CLOSELY BY A STREAKING PROJECTILE WHICH SMASHES THROUGH A NEARBY SUPPLY TENT!
BUT WHEN THE PROJECTILE COMES TO REST...IT ARISES IN THE FORM OF A MAN!
NEW GEAR WORKED LIKE A CHARM.
I CAN HEAR THE CARNIES STUMBLING OUTTA THE SACK ALREADY. BETTER LEAVE THE MESSAGE AND SPLIT.
THIS ROCK'LL DO.
IF ANYONE NOTICES IT... HE WILL!
MERE MINUTES LATER...
DANGDEST THING I EVER SAW, MR. QUENTIN! LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE FIRED AN ARTILLERY SHELL THROUGH THE THING! NO SHELL, THOUGH!
WELL, LEASTWAYS, THERE'S NOT MUCH DAMAGE. PROP 'ER UP THE BEST YOU CAN, AND WE'LL FIGURE OUR LOSSES IN THE MORNING!
6

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AREN'T YOU GOING TO CALL THE POLICE?
WOULDN'T DO MUCH GOOD, CYNTHIA! THEY'D JUST TELL US OUR POLE BROKE!
JOHNNY'S RIGHT, MZ RANDOLPH. SMALL-TOWN COPS AREN'T GREAT LOVERS OF CARNIVALS.
YOU MIGHT MENTION THAT WHEN YOU GET AROUND TO WRITIN' YOUR ARTICLE ON CARNY LIFE!
I KNOW ONLY ONE MAN WHO COULD'VE CAUSED THIS. IF I'M RIGHT, HE'D HAVE LEFT--!
YEAH! THAT'S HIS SCRAWL.
"Come Join us --C.B."
ELIOT? DID YOU FIND SOMETHING?
OH, NOTHING IMPORTANT, MS. RANDOLPH... JUST A SCRAP OF PAPER. I THOUGHT IT WAS A FIVER.
NO SUCH LUCK.
G'NIGHT.
I WISH I COULD FIGURE HIM OUT! HE TURNS INTO SILENT SAM WHENEVER I'M AROUND!
DOES HE HAVE SOMETHING AGAINST WOMEN WRITERS? MAYBE HE HAS SOMETHING TO HIDE! SURE... JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE IN THIS CRAZY CARNY!
WELL, EVERYONE ELSE EXCEPT FOR MY TENTMATES!
HEY, CYNTHIA--YOU GONNA PUT THE MYSTERIOUS TENT COLLAPSE IN YOUR ARTICLE?
PROBABLY, PATTI.
THAT'S "EXOTIC" DANCIN'.
JUST MAKE SURE YOU MENTION MY ECSTATIC DANCIN', OKAY?
NOT THE WAY I DO IT! HAH!
NO MORE GROSS-OUTS TONIGHT--PLEASE!
7

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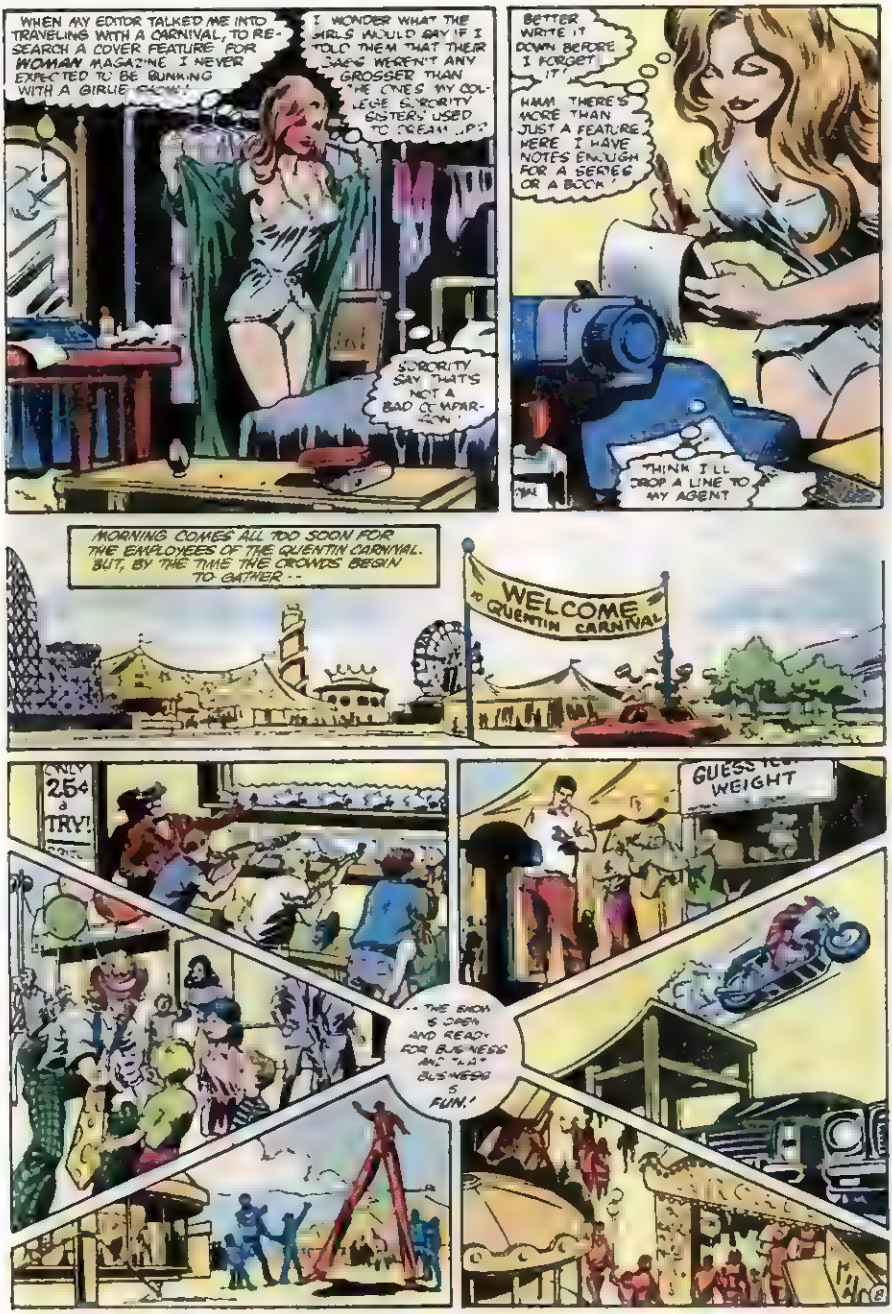
WHEN MY EDITOR TALKED ME INTO TRAVELING WITH A CARNIVAL, TO RESEARCH A COVER FEATURE FOR WOMAN MAGAZINE I NEVER EXPECTED TO BE GUNKING WITH A GIRLIE SHOW!
I WONDER WHAT THE GIRLS WOULD SAY IF I TOLD THEM THAT THEIR SHOWS WEREN'T ANY GROSSER THAN THE ONES MY COLLEGE SORORITY SISTERS USED TO "DREAM UP"!
SORORITY SAY THAT'S NOT A BAD OCCUPATION!
BETTER WRITE IT DOWN BEFORE I FORGET IT!
HMM. THERE'S MORE THAN JUST A FEATURE HERE. I HAVE NOTES ENOUGH FOR A SERIES OR A BOOK!
THINK I'LL DROP A LINE TO MY AGENT
MORNING COMES ALL TOO SOON FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF THE QUENTIN CARNIVAL. BUT, BY THE TIME THE CROWDS BEGIN TO GATHER --
WELCOME TO QUENTIN CARNIVAL
ONLY 25¢ a TRY!
GUESS YOUR WEIGHT
-- THE BARN IS OPEN AND READY FOR BUSINESS AND "LA" BUSINESS IS FUN!

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AT SUNDOWN, THE MIDWAY COMES INTO ITS FULL GLORY--ITS RIDES ALL ASLOW WITH INCANDESCENT LIGHT!
BUT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CARNIVAL GROUNDS
IT OUGHTTA BE RIGHT AROUND HERE SOMEWHERES, IF'N I KNOW MY CURRENT!
THERE! I KNEW THAT A CARNIVAL THIS SIZE HAD TO HAVE A PORTABLE TRANSFORMER FOR ALL THEIR RIDES AN' LIGHTS!
NICE LI'L RIG.
LEASTWAYS, IT WAS!
WITH ONE SMOOTH MOTION THE LANKY FIGURE UNCOILS A STRANGELY-CRAFTED BULLWHIP AND CRACKS IT RIGHT INTO THE HEART OF THE TRANSFORMER!
KA-KOW
THE CARNIVAL ABRUPTLY SHUTS DOWN
HEY!

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SOCK!
WHAT A MESS!
I'VE SEEN WHOLE SUB-STATIONS "ARC-OVER" DURING STORMS, BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY TRANSFORMER OF THIS SIZE MELT DOWN BEFORE
DOWNRIGHT WEIRD
IT'S ALMOST AS IF A MASSIVE OVERLOAD HAD BEEN SHUNTED THROUGH IT!
%@&$#!! WE'LL HAVE TO CLOSE FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT! FRED, CALL AROUND AND SEE IF YOU CAN FIND US A REPLACEMENT FOR TOMORROW!
THE REST OF YOU RUSTLE UP SOME LADDERS!
LADDERS? WHAT FOR?
TO GET THE CUSTOMERS DOWN OFF THE FERRIS WHEEL YA %@&$#* FOOL!
BUT, WHILE THE WEARY ROUSTABOUTS TOOK BACK TONIGHT'S MISHAP, ELSEWHERE...
NO!
IT WAS SOMETHING HE'D HOPED HE WOULDN'T FIND
I WANT TO GO STRAIGHT!
WHY WON'T THEY LEAVE ME ALONE?
WHY?

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A NEW TRANSFORMER IS FOUND THE NEXT DAY AND THINGS RETURN TO NORMAL.
BY DAY'S END JOHNNY BLAZE IS AGAIN RIDING THE STREETS WITH HIS RETURN
WHILE A FEW HUNDRED FEET AWAY...
TICKETS
HUH?
WHAT? THERE'S NOBODY HERE
I AM HARDLY A NOBODY
HEY! WHO'S SIGNORE!
ALAS, MY BROTHER AND I MUST WORK IN ANONYM
BUONA NOTTE MY FRIEND

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ONE HOUR LATER
NO LOCALS COULD'VE PULLED THIS OFF MR QUENTIN. DO YOU HAVE ANY ENEMIES WHO ARE ACROBATS?
SURE WERE A NERVY PAIR, CLEANIN' OUT YOUR BOX OFFICE AND LEAVIN A THREATENING MESSAGE BEHIND.
I JUST HOPE THAT THREAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY HAVE MORE DEVELOPMENT PLANNED. THIS SHOW'S HAD A LOT OF TROUBLES LATELY. EXPENSIVE TROUBLES.
IF WE HAVE ANY MORE, WE JUST MIGHT GO BELLY-UP!
HERE COMES E & L
ELIOT! WHAT'RE YOU DOIN', SLINKIN' BACK INTO THE SHADOWS LIKE THAT?
KEEP IT DOWN, POP! I JUST WANT TO AVOID THE COPS!
SON, TELL ME YOU HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS BURGLARY
WHAT?! IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?
DO YOU HONESTLY THINK I'D DO ANYTHING TO EMBARRASS?
THAT'S GREAT! THAT'S JUST GREAT!
"E & L"
HAVE I EVER CROSSED ANYONE WITH THOSE INITIALS? COULD THEY BE TRYING TO GET AT ME THROUGH THE CARNIVAL?
JOHN'S GUT THAT FARAWAY LOOK IN HIS EYES. COULD "THE DEACON OF N.S." BE MIXED UP IN THIS?
IF IT IS, MAYBE IT'S A GOOD THING HE DOESN'T KNOW THAT I KNOW HIS SECRET.
THAT'S A CHEERY THOUGHT. RED FOWLER, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE MAN'S FRIEND!

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ANOTHER DAY COMES AND GOES MORE THE CARNIVAL BUSY ON THE MAIN MIDWAY
BUT BELLA & ZELDA JUST BLOW THE SCENE
AS MADAME OLGA TELLS HER CUSTOMER'S FORTUNES SHE MAKES THEM SEE WHAT OTHER PEOPLE'S FUTURES HOLD
ALONG THE MIDWAY HE KEEPS CHECK THE CHANCE & PAY MORE MODERATELY
AND IN THE SNOW TENT THE CARNIVAL'S TAKE OUT THROUGH THE NIGHT... AS FOR SOME OF YOU PURE DIVERSIONS THAT LURK IN THE FIELD & FOREST AROUND
AND WHEN THE WORK IS FINALLY DONE
AM I GLAD THAT'S OVER
DON'T WORRY YOUR PRETTY WORKING GIRLS WE'LL ONLY BE IN THIS BURG A FEW MORE DAYS
AN' IN THE MEANTIME, OLD MAN QUENTIN IS BEEFING UP THE NIGHTTIME SECURITY.
INDEED AT THAT MOMENT...
YOU AND REB KEEP WATCH ALONG THE NORTH SIDE. BOB AND EUSTACE WILL RELIEVE YOU IN THREE HOURS
I'M GLAD WE'RE TRAINED UP TO GIVE US A CHANCE TO KEEP AN EYE ON JOHNNY
GOTCHA, MR. QUENTIN.
NOT THAT IT'D BE ANY MATCH FOR HIS DEMON... BUT MAYBE I COULD DO SOMETHING
MEANWHILE
ELLIOT? WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
LEAVIN'! THESE'RE GOOD FOLKS YOU WORK WITH. I DON'T WANT TO SEE 'EM HAVE ANY MORE TROUBLE

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THEN YOU DO KNOW WHAT'S BEHIND ALL THIS! I WANT YOU TO TELL QUENTIN--!
YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO THAT. I'M A WANTED MAN. WOULD RALPH QUENTIN KNOWINGLY HARBOR A FUGITIVE? YOU WANT TO SEE ME BACK BEHIND BARS?
THEN TELL ME!
NO... I WOULDN'T BE SAFE FOR YOU TO KNOW
BELIEVE ME POP MY WAY IS BETTER. IF I LEAVE THE TROUBLES WILL FOLLOW ME
IT... WAS GOOD SEEING YOU AGAIN. I SHALL NO
THE OLD ALCHEMIST OPENS HIS MOUTH, BUT THE WORDS CATCH IN HIS THROAT...
IT'S NO USE. I CAN'T CALL HIM BACK NOW. THE TIME TO DO THAT PASSED YEARS AGO.
MY ONLY SON AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN SAY OR DO
BUT BEHIND THAT VERY TENT
I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW SIMPLE IT WAS TO SLIP PAST THOSE CARNY GUARDS IN THE
"THIS SECRET MESSAGE" BUSINESS IS FOR THE BIRDS BUT IT'S WHAT THE OTHERS WANT!"
BESIDES ELIOT WILL REMEMBER MY MESSAGE
FOR AS LONG AS HE LIVES
SKRITCH
WHILE BASEBALL IS IN FULL SWING
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, I CAN'T LEAVE? YOU DON'T THINK THAT I--?
I'M NOT ACCUSING YOU OF ANYTHING, ELIOT, BUT YOU ARE THE ONLY STRANGER WITH THE SHOW. IT'LL LOOK BAD IF

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JOHNNY NEVER GETS A CHANCE TO FINISH HIS SENTENCE
WHOOOSH
POP!
OMIGOD! IS ANYONE IN THERE?
ELIOT-- NO!
LET ME GO, RED! MY OLD MAN'S IN THERE!
DON'T BE CRAZY, ELIOT! YOU'D JUST GET YOURSELF KILLED!
RED'S RIGHT, ELIOT! YOU STAY HERE!
I'LL GO!
JOHNNY!
IF ANYONE HAS A CHANCE OF GETTING TO CORKY, IT'S ME. AND IF I DON'T MAKE IT...
...THE WORLD WILL HAVE ONE LESS DEMON TO WORRY ABOUT!

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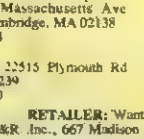

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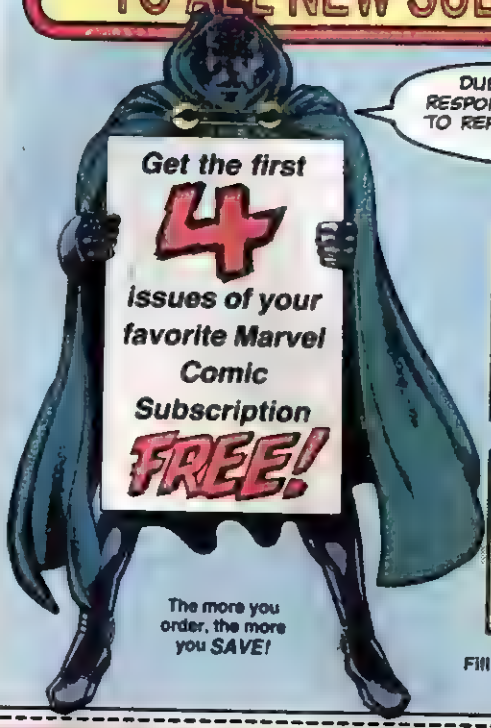


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THERE HE IS!
SORRY! HEY CORKY!
HE'S OUT COLD PROBABLY CAUSE OF THE SMOKE!
AND WE'RE TRAPPED!
GREAT!
THE GHOST RIDER COULD GET HIM OUT OF HERE BUT WOULD HE?
I'LL HAVE TO CHANCE IT HAVE TO TRY TO KEEP HIM UNDER CONTROL
OKAY DEMON! I'M LETTING YOU OUT-- BUT YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING IN RETURN! SAVE THIS MAN!
BUT THE STEELY DETERMINATION SEEMS TO BLAZE AWAY WITH THE HUMAN FEATURES AS THE GHOST RIDER TAKES OVER
SAVE
THIS
MAN?
DOES BLAZE THINK HE CAN CALL ON ME TO DO HIS PETTY ERRANDS?
BAH! THIS MORTAL MEANS NOTHING TO ME!
DISGUSTED THE GHOST RIDER HURLS THE LITTLE CLOWN AWAY FROM HIM--
--AND OUT ON THE HIGHWAY HAD-VERTENTLY SAVING CORKY'S LIFE!
JOHNNY! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

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HAH-HA-HA! LISTEN TO THAT FOOL CALLING FOR BLAZE!
WELL, PERHAPS I WILL LET HIM HAVE HIS FRIEND BACK...
IN A WEEK OR TWO! HAW-HA!
NOOOOOOO!!
UNNGH! B-BLAZE IS F-FIGHTING ME?!?
I'VE BEEN OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE PHYSICAL WORLD FOR TOO LONG! IT'S HARD TO MAINTAIN CONTROL! BUT YOU WON'T WIN BLAZE--
--I WON'T LET YOU WIN! YOU DARE NOT TAKE OVER A FORM WHOSE CLOTHING IS AFLAME!!
GOTTA WARN HER ON FIRE!
THE DEVIL HE A THAT'S THE GHOST RIDER... BUT SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH HIM! WE'LL [illegible] EVER IT IS--
-- I CAN'T LET THE OTHERS SEE HIM LIKE THIS!
JOHNNY THIS IS RED COME BACK JOHNNY COME BACK
FOR A MOMENT THE HUMAN? FIGURE FOUGHT RED POWERS GHOST

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TAKE IT EASY PAL. YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT.
I HOPE YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT, RED.
I KNOW MORE THAN YOU REALIZE BUDDY. JUST HELP ME!
JUST RELAX, THERE'S AN AMBULANCE ON ITS WAY!
ELIOT HASN'T SAID A WORD SINCE WE GOT HERE. CAN'T SAY AS I BLAME HIM...
EMERGENCY ROOM
POOR GUY IS REALLY TAKING IT HARD. IT'S ALMOST AS IF HE HOLDS HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR CORRY'S ACCIDENT... IF IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.
MR. FRANKLIN?
YES? MY FATHER...
HE'LL NEED SOME BLOOD TREATMENT BUT FOR NOW HE'S OUT OF DANGER.
HEY, MEGAN.
QUESTION, BUT DOES HE HAVE HOSPITALIZATION INSURANCE?
NO, BUT THAT'S ALL RIGHT. YOU JUST SEE TO HIS TREATMENT. I'LL FOOT THE BILLS.
IT WILL BE SEVERAL THOUSAND DOLLARS.
MONEY IS NO PROBLEM. I CAN RAISE...

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SOMETIME LATER
NOTHING LEFT OF DAD'S TENT I SEE THE COPS ARE STILL QUESTIONING ANYONE WHO'S STILL AWAKE. I BETTER MOVE OUT FAST--
BEFORE THEY REMEMBER THAT THEY HAVEN'T TALKED TO ME.
EH? I DIDN'T THINK ELIOT WOULD BE LEAVING NOW NOT WITH CORKY IN THE HOSPITAL! WHY--?
SUCH NEED IN THE WOODS
I DON'T WANT TO BE THE BEAR AGAIN, BUT OH THE HUNT OF MONEY BE WELL WORTH IT...
WHAT THE DEVIL...
HE'S DUDED HIMSELF UP IN CUTTLE'S AND PALS' WHAT'S HE
WITCH HAUNTS
WHAT THE DEVIL'S HE DOING ON?
ELIOT... HERE I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU TO CONTACT US THROUGH A MINT AD... AND YOU'RE WALTZING UP, BIG AS LIFE!
GOOD TO SEE YA, PARD. HOW'D YA FIND US?
YOU FELLOWS ARE PRETTY RESOURCEFUL... AND I KNEW YOU HAD TO BE SOMEWHERE CLOSE, IT WASN'T TOO HARD TO DEDUCE WHERE.

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SHOOT-FIRE! NOW I KNOW I WAS RIGHT TO WANT YOU BACK IN THE FOLD!
LUIGI! ELIOT HAS RETURNED!
I HAVE EYES, ERNESTO!
AWRIGHT! NOW WE'RE REALLY BACK IN BUSINESS.
AH, IT'S GONNA BE JUST LIKE OLD TIMES!
HECK! IT'S GONNA BE BETTER!
YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T REALLY WANT THIS, JUST WANTED TO SEE MY OLD MAN AN' GO STRAIGHT FOR ONCE.
SHEE-OOT! YOU KNOW YOU COULDN'T DO THAT! YOU'D HAVE GONE LOCO AFTER A WHILE!
YOU REALLY LIKE TO FLEECE THE RUBES! C'MON, ADMIT IT YOU LOVE IT WHEN WE ROB THE SUCKERS
TH-THAT'S PRACTICALLY WHAT THE GHOST RIDER SAID TO ME IN MY DREAM
DON'T DO IT, ELIOT! EVEN IF IT'S TRUE, DON'T DO IT!
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW HAPPY YOU'VE MADE THIS OL COUNTRY BOY JUS' BY SHOWIN' UP, ELIOT! WE NEED YA!
YOU WERE ALWAYS THE CRAFTIEST ONE OF US! SAY YOU'LL BE OUR NEW HEAD HONCHO!
OKAY FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE YOU'VE GOT ME
NOW THAT'S A RELIEF HECK IF YOU'D TURNED US DOWN WE'D HAVE BEEN STUCK WITH FIRE-EATER THERE TO DO OUR PLANNIN' AIN'T THAT RIGHT, HOT-STUFF?
HEY-HEY! YEAH, I GUESS SO
GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK, ELIOT. WHAT.. AH.. CHANGED YOUR MIND?
IF YOU MUST KNOW, FIRE-EATER, I NEED A LOT OF CASH FOR MY OLD MAN. HE'S IN THE HOSPITAL.
HIS TENT BURNT DOWN TONIGHT
SORRY TO HEAR THAT. IT'S LUCKY YOU WEREN'T CAUGHT IN THE BLAZE WITH HIM.
YEAH
UH...HEY, OLD PARD, YOU GOT ANY IDEAS FOR OUR FIRST JOB?

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# GHOST WRITERS!

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

TOM DeFALCO
EDITOR
LINDA GRANT
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Mr. DeFalco,

Seems like it was only yesterday – has it been a year already? – that I was welcoming Roger Stern back to the pages of DOCTOR STRANGE with high hopes for the future. And he certainly hasn't disappointed me there!

So, now he has not only the Sorcerer Supreme, but also Marvel's resident demon to contend with. Sure, they've already met once or twice, but the third time might be the charm. Speaking of third times, isn't it about time that Johnny beat Flagg Fargo for good?

My blood pressure really went up when I heard Rog was taking over with issue #68. And due to bad weather, I had to wait a whole extra week to get a copy! Basketcase city!

Well, it was really good! Of course, diehards know the origin of Ghost Rider. But it was nice that GR waited a while before he took on the murderer, cat-&-mouse style. It seems that the demon is actually learning a little patience. It was wild seeing him protect a house of God. . . nice plot twist. That's the sort of thing that makes a book good.

Keep up with the sourballs and say hello to Big Chief Shooter for me.

Ellen Layendecker
856 La Mesa Drive
Portola Valley, CA 94025

**Rog tells us that he hasn't had a sourball since he moved upstate, Ellen. . . but that he has found a store which stocks a good brand of Root Beer Barrels! MMM-mmm!**

Dear Tom,

I feared for the worst when I heard that a new creative team was being formed for GHOST RIDER.

Well, with the appearance of GHOST RIDER #68, I was astonished.

What better way for a new writer and artist to begin, than by retelling the origin of Ghost Rider! It's been some time since we've seen the origin, and the way new story was told was quite fantastic. I never expected the priest in the story to be anything but! A great ending! It had me raving.

Bob Budiansky's art was great! I liked very much the way he employed a Ploog-ish style during the origin sequences, and sort of artistically segued into his own during the rest of the story. The mood and the atmosphere took me back to the old days of MARVEL SPOTLIGHT.

It was interesting that in the origin, that devil-who-isn't-THE-devil bore a striking resemblance to Mephisto! Deliberate?

If Rog and Bob are here to stay, I can only heap more praise upon you. Thanks for making my favorite comic book even better! I was worried for a while, but not any more!

Keep on biking!

Dave Pfeil
403 East 39th St. South
Wichita, KS 67233

**Deliberate?**
**You bet!**

Dear Tom,

I was suckered. I fell for it.

Generally, this doesn't happen. I've been reading comics for as long as I can remember, and when a writer sets up a surprise ending, I can usually catch the subtle foreshadowings. Even more often, I'll predict *exactly* what's going to happen, dismiss the efforts at surprise as noble-but-doomed.

Not with GHOST RIDER #69.

What makes it amazing is that I read the foreshadowings, but didn't pick them up. When Johnny Blaze noticed how much gold there was in the church, I thought, "Hmmm, an odd remark," and promptly turned the page.

What makes it amazing is that when I got to the letters page, I read through the whole page without really looking at the facing page. (This may reflect that in the past I've never expected much from this book, so who thought there would be something worth looking at on the next page?)

What makes it amazing is that I've never really liked GHOST RIDER. I mean, who cares about motorcycles and this strange character? Who has patience with a book that can't make up its mind whether it's about demons, or super heroes or cycle stunts?

So, when I got to page 16, I had been suckered. I almost jumped when I saw that hand come through the booth. Moments later, I looked over the page, then over the construction of "The Curse of Jonathan Blaze." The precision with which this story unfolds is remarkable. Page 16, which panel by panel unfolds the heart of the story, giving away nothing until it's ready, is virtually flawless. First, the close shot of the priest, and his thought balloon which gives so natural a reaction to Johnny's story, making us believe the "priest" is a priest all the more. How refreshing, after all, for the priest to be bored with a confession and want to leave. Then, the high-angle shot, just coincidentally including a cross – made – of gold as the priest hesitates oh-so-tellingly before the word "confession." Then, the revelation that this is not a priest, and the golden light comes through the latticework, casting a shower of golden crosses over the priest's face. Eerily, we know what casts the light without being told, and allowing us to make that discovery ourselves is a hallmark of subtler horror stories. Finally, the hand bursts through the lattice, a hand we normally see only gloved, and the lattice fragments fly everywhere with a remarkably three-dimensional feel. At that moment, we realize that we haven't been witnessing a simple retelling of an origin, but rather the hatching of a diabolical scheme for revenge.

It was a skillfully assembled climax to a most striking story. If your debut is this good, Rog and Bob, you might just get me liking GHOST RIDER.

Brian Nelson
4401 Lee Highway, Apt. 57
Arlington, VA 22207

**That's our goal, Brian!**

Dear Guys,

You've done it! You've produced a perfect issue of GHOST RIDER! When I write, I usually reserve a section of the letter for a little criticism, but this month I can thankfully skip that section.

I don't want to sound cynical, but origin stories are usually only interesting the first time around. Well, GHOST RIDER #68 dashed that little theory right against the rocks. This was a fresh, interesting, and overall attention-holding yarn. Although I already know GR's origin – or *thought* I did – I found myself wondering what would happen next!

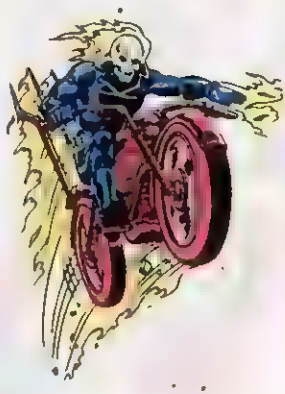
Continuing with the accoladas, the idea of Johnny telling his origin in the form of a confession was simply brilliant! I was really knocked for a loop when I found that the "priest" was really a murderer. It took me totally by surprise!

Bob Budiansky looks like a most promising Ghost-artist. The layout of the figures on page 14, for instance, was superbly done. And the expressions of pure terror on the phony priest's face were captured beautifully.

Now a word of praise – and of welcome – for Roger Stern! You did a great job this issue, Rog! GR's taunting of his would-be victims has never been handled better. And, as mentioned above, the storyline itself was fabulous. Welcome, and good luck to the new Ghost-Team!

Dave Schmidt
134 Senator Street
Brooklyn, NY 11220

**And let's not forget Joe Rubinstein, who added his considerable talents to our premiere outing. . . and Dave Simons, who signed on with GR #68. Joe and Dave's incredible inks deserve a big hand, too!**



**NEXT ISSUE: Can the Quantin Carnival survive? Heck, can Johnny Blaze survive? And what new devilment does Eliot have in mind? You'll find out in just thirty days. . . so start saving those dimes now!**

**And in the meantime, drive carefully!**

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# BULLPEN BULLETINS

I'm sorry to have to begin this month's column with a downer, but...

Some time ago, Marvel Comics produced an issue of Marvel Team-Up featuring Spider-Man and The Not Ready For Prime Time Players, including John Belushi. After the book hit the stands, I received a call from John who was very excited about it. He asked if he could please stop by the office and meet us Bullpeniners. Please, he said. Wow. No problem. He showed up around closing time, and the whole crew flocked around him. Quickly, he made us all feel like old friends, and apparently he admired our work as much as we admired his. He said he followed our comics and quoted scenes and developments from recent issues to prove it. Likewise, we talked about our favorite stuff on Saturday Night Live, and the whole thing degenerated into clowning around, laughing, and feeling good. John even invited a bunch of us to the opening night party for the cast of *Animal House*. We went and had an unforgettable evening mostly because of the hour or so John spent with us introducing us around to a trainload of our favorite entertainers. What a night.

He's gone now. Even though we really had only a brief personal acquaintance with him, we'll miss him. A lot.

Okay. We're going on with the regular stuff now, because we ought to.

**I CAN'T TELL YOU...**

...how many letters I've gotten expressing concern that I may be pushing myself too hard. Seems I've mentioned in print several times that I've been staying up late writing this column and the Bullpen Special column which appears in *Moon Knight*, *Ka-Zar*, and *Micronauts* (our Direct Sales exclusive titles, available only at comics specialty stores and selected retail outlets). Thanks for your kind concern. In fact, I am feeling a little worn down these days, but it's not from writing, folks, it's from

**CONVENTIONS!**

In the last five weeks I've attended conventions in Columbus, Ohio, Tampa, Florida, and Indianapolis, Indiana! I've been spending precious weekends on stages talking into microphones, answering questions, sitting behind display tables, signing autographs, being interviewed on TV and radio, meeting with Marvel artists and writers who were also guests (especially out-of-towners who seldom get into the office), looking over samples shown by folks eager to break into the business and lots more.

At one con — I can't believe it, but I forget which one — I even did a sketch for the amusement of the onlooking crowd, which was asked by star artist Joe Rubinstein. For your amusement, I printed it next column. Not bad, huh? See, with the right inker, (one who redraws virtually the whole picture) I could've been a contender!

Through it all, I had a great time! Like most of the people in comics, I love my work. I could attend conventions and talk about stories, art, the people in the comics, and the people behind the comics till I drop.

Which may be soon. Not too soon, I hope. Tomorrow I leave for Bologna, Italy, to represent Marvel Comics at the Bologna Book Fair, a colossal gathering of publishers from all over the world — a convention, more or less. Am I going to enjoy it? You bet! Will I collapse from exhaustion during it? Tune in next month!

**DEADLINE...**

I've got a lot of news and stuff to talk about, but it'll keep till next month. In the interests of fairness and at the insistence of the Bob Layton Anti-Defamation & Disparagement Elite Revenge Squad (B.L.A.D.D.E.R.S.), I have donated the remaining space to Bob Layton, in order that he might reply to alleged allegations made concerning him in this column.

Till next time...

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**MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL #22 BLADE RUNNER** — Not since their unforgettable adaptation of *The Empire Strikes Back* has there been an event like GOODWIN, WILLIAMSON and GARZON's version of the great new adventure film. Together with Marvel stalwart DAN GREEN, they've produced another adaptation that will leave you breathless!

## THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST

**MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #91** — The Thing and the Sphinx!
**TEAM AMERICA #4**
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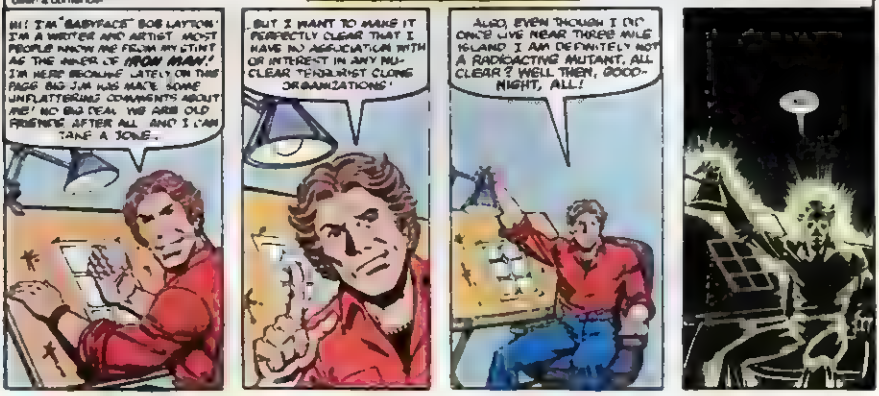
**DAZZLER #19**
**KA-ZAR #18**
**DENNIS THE MENACE #11**
**DAREDEVIL #186**
**GHOST RIDER #72**
**AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #232** — Including a free copy of the **Marvel Comics Guide to Collecting Comics** (for info on the guide, see below in this list).
**CAPTAIN AMERICA #273**
**G. I. JOE #3**
**HERCULES (Limited Series) #1** — See Hype Box
**MOON KNIGHT #28**
**THOR #333**
**MICRONAUTS #46**
**WOLVERINE (Limited Series) #1** — See Hype Box
**INCREDIBLE HULK #275**
**AVENGERS #223**
**CONAN #138**
**X-MEN #161**
**ROM #34**
**POWER MAN/IRON FIST #83**
**MARVEL TALES #143** — Reprinting *Amazing Spider-Man #6* by Lee and Ditko.
**MARVEL GUIDE TO COLLECTING COMICS** — A nifty introduction to comics collecting for fun and/or profit.
**FANTASTIC FOUR #248** — The return of **Doctor Doom!**
**MARVEL TEAM-UP #121** — **Spider-Man** and the **Human Torch!**
**IRON MAN #162**
**PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #70** — **The return of Cloak and Dagger** — part II!
**DEFENDERS #111**
**STAR WARS #63**
**MASTER OF KUNG FU #116**

### MARVEL MAGAZINES

**CRAZY #10**
**SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #76**
**EPIC ILLUSTRATED #11**
**MARVEL FANFARE #4**

### MARVEL SUPER SPECIALS

**#22: BLADE RUNNER** — ARCHIE GOODWIN, AL WILLIAMSON and CARLOS GARZON (of *The Empire Strikes Back* fame) adapt the blockbuster movie of the year! Cover painting by JIM STERANKO.
**#23: ANNIE** — TOM DeFALCO and WIN MORTIMER bring you the official comics version of the smash hit movie musical!


HI! I'M "BABYFACE" BOB LAYTON! I'M A WRITER AND ARTIST. MOST PEOPLE KNOW ME FROM MY STINT AS THE INKER OF IRON MAN! I'M HERE BECAUSE LATELY ON THIS PAGE BIG JIM HAS MADE SOME UNFLATTERING COMMENTS ABOUT ME! NO BIG DEAL. WE ARE OLD FRIENDS AFTER ALL, AND I CAN TAKE A JOKE...
BUT I WANT TO MAKE IT PERFECTLY CLEAR THAT I HAVE NO ASSOCIATION WITH OR INTEREST IN ANY NUCLEAR TERRORIST CLONE ORGANIZATIONS!
ALSO, EVEN THOUGH I DO ONCE LIVE NEAR THREE MILE ISLAND I AM DEFINITELY NOT A RADIOACTIVE MUTANT, ALL CLEAR? WELL THEN, GOOD-NIGHT, ALL!

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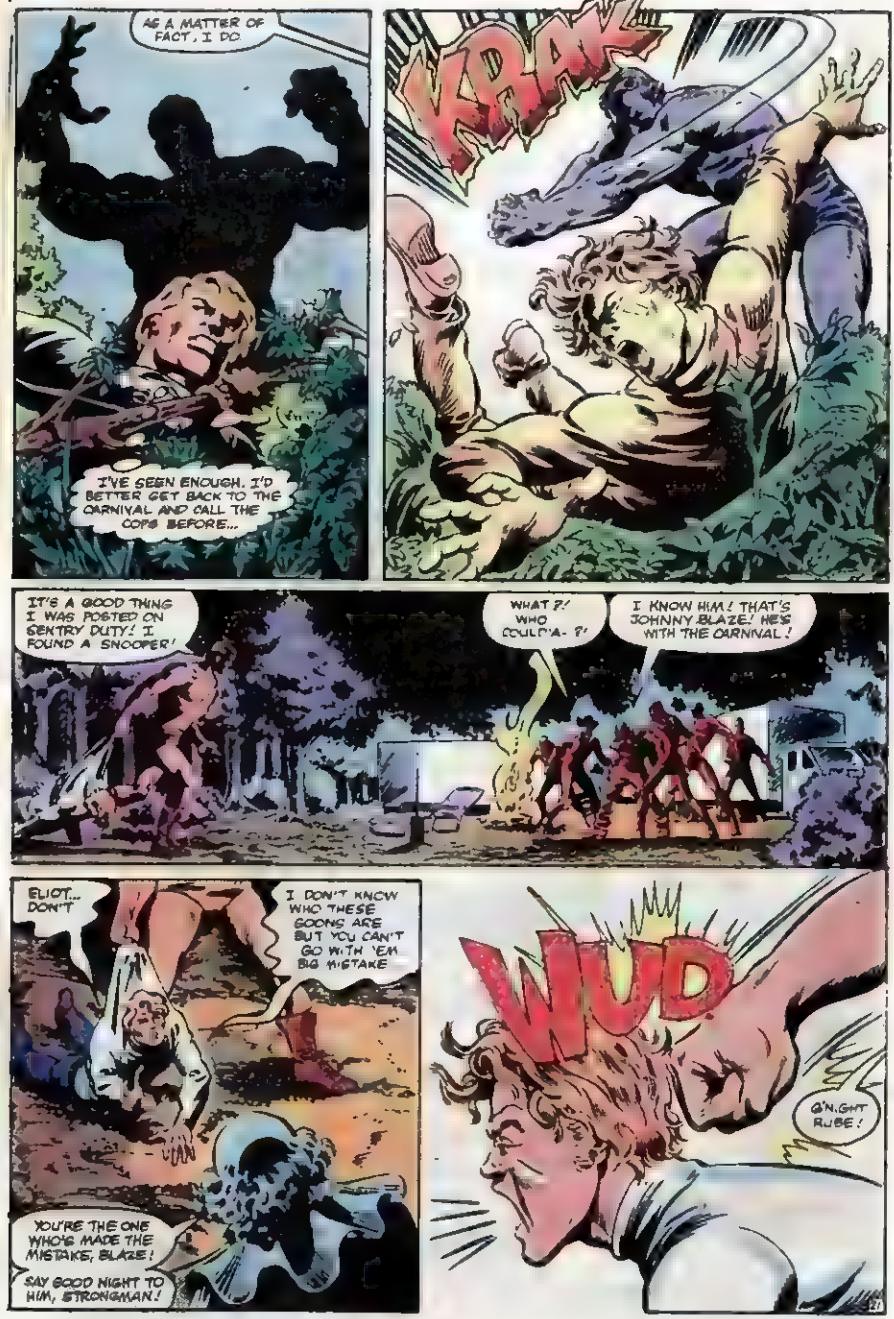
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DO.
I'VE SEEN ENOUGH. I'D BETTER GET BACK TO THE CARNIVAL AND CALL THE COPS BEFORE...
KRAK
IT'S A GOOD THING I WAS POSTED ON SENTRY DUTY! I FOUND A SNOOPER!
WHAT?! WHO COULD'A- B'
I KNOW HIM! THAT'S JOHNNY BLAZE! HE'S WITH THE CARNIVAL!
ELIOT... DON'T
I DON'T KNOW WHO THESE GOONS ARE BUT YOU CAN'T GO WITH 'EM BIG MISTAKE
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S MADE THE MISTAKE, BLAZE!
SAY GOOD NIGHT TO HIM, STRONGMAN!
WUD
G'NIGHT RUBE!

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I DON'T CARE IF FOLKS KNOW ME FROM ADAM, AS LONG AS THERE'S BIG MONEY AND GOOD TIMES AHEAD! WHAT DO YOU THINK, CANNON-BALL?
STRONG MAN, I'M UP FOR ANYTHING THE BOSS SUGGESTS!
WELL, CLOWN, WHAT'LL IT BE?
I RECKON THAT OUR NEW LEADER'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT, FIRE-EATER!
BENE! THE NAMES OF LUIGI AND ERNESTO GAMBONO SHOULD BE HOUSEHOLD WORDS!
ERNESTO AND LUIGI, MY BROTHER!
FIRST, WE TAKE CARE OF BLAZE, AND THEN--
--THE CIRCUS OF CRIME GOES ON THE ROAD AGAIN!
-to be continued...

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